

"What you do in the name of the people must be done with the consent of the people."
- Unknown

Supporting Documentation - Petition to Parliament

To the Legislative Assembly of Queensland & the House Of Representatives
Public Submission

RE: Failure of Western Downs Regional Council to Conduct Meaningful and honest Consultation Regarding the Proposed Dalby Cultural Centre in Thomas Jack Park

I write to bring to your attention a serious breach of community trust and democratic principle in the decision-making process surrounding the proposed Dalby Cultural Centre in Thomas Jack Park, Dalby.

This petition to Parliament, and a previous petition³ to our Western Downs Regional Council, by the residents of Western Downs, draws to the attention of the House:

That we, the residents of Western Downs, are deeply concerned about the proposal by Western Downs Regional Council to redevelop Thomas Jack Park in Dalby for the construction of a Cultural and Tourism Centre. We believe that this development poses a direct threat to the park's historic character, ecological value, recreational purpose, and social utility, and that the Council has failed to adequately engage with the community on the matter^{1,2}.

While the goal of revitalising Dalby's cultural facilities is supported in principle, the manner in which Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) conducted its consultation and site selection process has been significantly flawed. The outcome — to build in Thomas Jack Park — appears pre-determined, despite widespread community concern.

1. The Most Basic Question Was Never Asked

Despite a detailed 39-page report titled *Dalby Cultural Centre Community Engagement Report and Site Analysis (June 2024)*⁹ **Council never directly asked residents whether they wanted the Centre built in Thomas Jack Park or not**^{3,9}. This omission is not a technical oversight — it is a **deliberate failure to seek consent**.

This project impacts the heart of Dalby and its civic identity. In such cases, public consent is not optional — it is essential. Without asking the public a clear question on location, Council has proceeded **without a social licence**.

This omission also invalidates the premise of “engagement” and contradicts the intent of the Local Government Act 2009, which states that Council decisions must be based on **meaningful community consultation**.

2. Only 2% of the Population Participated

Council's “Have Your Say” survey collected only 747 responses⁹ across a region of 33,843 people⁴ — just 2.2%⁷. This figure is dwarfed by the more than **1122 residents who signed a petition, clearly opposing development in Thomas Jack Park**^{3,5} (Handed to Council at Jandowae WDRC meeting April 18th 2024). Yet this public will was dismissed without due process.

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3. Survey Framing Was Confusing and Manipulative

The 7-page survey⁹ was framed around abstract values and planning priorities, not community preference for park preservation. It was broken into two parts, with no simple question like:

"Do you want Thomas Jack Park preserved as a park, or redeveloped as a Cultural Centre?"

Council's refusal to ask this question reflects either gross negligence or deliberate obfuscation.

4. Better Alternatives Exist

The previous site at **107 Drayton Street** already hosted the former MyALL 107 Centre. It is:

- Already cleared
- Away from residential streets
- Flat, flood-safe (or risk of very easily mitigated), and connected to infrastructure
- **Ample in size with room for car parking**
- Not shaded, treed, public green-space that would be lost

By almost every metric — environmental impact, cost, logistics, and heritage preservation — 107 Drayton Street remains the most sensible option. 107 Drayton and its ancillary blocks belong to the people too and also has cultural significance, as it is the namesake of Gallery 107 (original site)¹⁰.

5. Loss of Green Space and Emotional Heritage

Thomas Jack Park is more than a park — it is the **emotional heart** of Dalby. Weddings, birthdays, community events, and simple daily moments have occurred under its trees for generations. Its use is informal and inclusive — from kids on swings to seniors resting under the shade. Mature trees and vegetation that have taken at least two decades to grow, along Drayton and Condamine streets provide a protective buffer zone for park visitors inside the park. This space, these trees and vegetation simply make the park a park, and provide peace and quiet from heavy traffic.

This makes it **civic heritage**, deserving of protection^{1,2,3,6}. The proposed development threatens this heritage and would irrevocably change the park's character.

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6. Road Safety: A National Interest

Thomas Jack Park is a vital and well known rest-stop on Queensland's road network¹¹ — a cool, shaded break point for:

- Caravaners
- Farmers hauling trailers or livestock
- Travellers journeying from as far as **Brisbane to Darwin or Townsville to Tamworth.**
- Tourists, Truckers and Travellers alike, stopping for food and rest

The Park is adjacent to cafes, shops, and petrol stations — allowing people to stop safely, rest, eat and revive. This activity supports local businesses and could **save lives**.

If the Park is consumed by development, its function as an open, welcoming, easily accessible rest-point is diminished — a loss not just to Dalby, but to the broader highway network of rural Australia. The impact will be felt **statewide**.

7. A Better Way Forward

This issue is not just about critique — it's about vision. We can build a Cultural Centre without losing the heart of our town. We can honour both the past and future — and do so with respect to democratic values, public safety, and regional identity.

Therefore, I respectfully petition the Queensland Parliament to:

1. **Review whether Western Downs Regional Council has complied with the Local Government Act 2009**, particularly the requirement for meaningful community engagement.¹
2. **Urge or compel Council to hold a public vote or referendum** asking the clear, unambiguous question:

“Do you want Thomas Jack Park preserved as a park, or redeveloped into a Cultural Centre ?” — Seek the Truth

3. **Protect Thomas Jack Park's function as a national road safety rest-stop**, cultural landscape, and civic commons — in the interest of all Queenslanders.
4. **Ensure that the Queensland Government acknowledges — as part of the public record — that the residents of Dalby and the Western Downs have not given informed consent for the Cultural Centre that is planned to be built in Thomas Jack Park.**

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References

1. **Local Government Act 2009 (QLD)**, Section 4(2)(b): “democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement.”
2. **Local Government Act 2009 (QLD)**, Section 4(2)(c): “transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest.”
3. **Western Downs Regional Council**, *Petition Report – Dalby Cultural Centre Proposal*, presented at Jandowae Council Meeting, April 2024.
4. **Australian Bureau of Statistics** (via Wikipedia), *Western Downs Regional Council area – Estimated Resident Population*, 2024.
5. **Save Thomas Jack Park**, *Online and Manual Entries with Signatures*, launched March 2024.
6. **Dalby Herald**, *Outrage over Thomas Jack Park Plan*, 12 May 2024.
7. **Community Correspondence**, *2PercentResponse_HaveSay.pdf*, submitted to Council, January 16th 2025 at the Council General Meeting in Chinchilla, 80-86 Heeney St Chinchilla 4413.
8. **Australian Local Government Association**, *Community Engagement Toolkit*, 2021.
9. **Dalby Cultural Centre Community Engagement Report and Site Analysis Study**. June 2024
10. **Gallery 107** 23 Marble Street Dalby gallery107dalby.com
11. **Thomas Jack Park Dalby, Western Downs Area - Attractions**
<https://www.queensland.com/au/en/things-to-do/attractions/p-5f62ef7559fa76ec789fd91a-thomas-jack-park>

“Conveniently located on the highway through town, you will find ample shaded lawns to stretch your legs, a playground for the kids to let out some energy. Parking and public amenities are easily located off the main highway.” - *Pet Friendly, Coach Parking, Carpark, BBQ*

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